



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Address by the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Dr. Ihsanoglu

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 14, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his address. Dr. Ihsanoglu, we appreciate the interest you take in the OSCE and your many positive contributions to past OSCE conferences on tolerance.

We also wish you success during tomorrow’s conference, organized by the Austrian Foreign Ministry, on “Islam in a Pluralistic World.” Daniel Fried, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, will also be speaking at that meeting.

I was struck in your closing remarks by one mention you made that we are all created differently. The founders of my country in fact had a different view when they established our democracy – that is that we are all created equal. I don’t think that in fact we have a difference on opinion on this issue, I think it’s more just a semantic issue.

We very much share the thrust of your remarks and your concerns about intolerance and discrimination.

Recent events in the OSCE region and beyond have shown that we all must work to combat discrimination, poverty and injustice. That is why the U.S. strongly supports the activities of the ODIHR’s Program on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in this regard.

We also believe that ODIHR should continue its productive cooperation with other international organizations dealing with issues of intolerance and discrimination.

The U.S. strongly supports the three Personal Representatives on tolerance, who are an important link between the OSCE institutions and the civil society organizations that fight intolerance at the grassroots level in participating States.

The recent one-day meeting on intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, held on the margins of the HDIM in Warsaw, provided an opportunity for a diverse group of NGOs from throughout the region to air their concerns, and to share ideas for solving them.

NGOs at that meeting, as well as the 700 participants in the OSCE’s Cordoba Conference in June, made clear that it is time to go beyond mere “tolerance,” to activities that promote mutual respect and understanding among groups in society.

Furthering respect for diversity while promoting integration and participation in public life are key elements of the OSCE's approach to migration. We believe that migration and integration with respect for diversity are areas in which the OSCE and the OIC could productively reinforce one another's activities in the future.

The United States is a strong advocate of international cooperation on tolerance issues and welcomes increased dialogue between the OSCE and the OIC. Intolerance and discrimination are serious threats to security that require the coordinated efforts of the OSCE and other international organizations.

The United States commends efforts that have been taken thus far by the OSCE to promote tolerance. We hope that that dialogue between the OSCE and OIC will increase in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.